

# **The Tale of Macbeth.**

## **In Five Minutes.**

### **In Limericks.**

*Adapted by Chris Neville-Smith from the play by William Shakespeare*

#### ***The Cast (in order of appearance):***

This sketch is written for a minimum of five actors (3 male, 1 female, and 1 narrator of either sex). Where five actors are used, it is recommended the parts are allocated as follows:

<b>Chorus (1)</b>	
<b>Macbeth (2)</b>	King's General, later Thane of Cawdor, later King of Scotland
<b>Banquo (3)</b>	King's General
<b>Witch (4)</b>	One of three witch-sisters
<b>Duncan (5)</b>	King of Scotland
<b>Malcolm (3)</b>	Duncan's son and heir to the throne
<b>Lady Macbeth (4)</b>	Wife of Macbeth
<b>Macduff (5)</b>	Leader of the resistance to Macbeth's rule
<b>Siward (3)</b>	A fighter in Macduff's army

At a push, this can also be performed by four actors if the chorus's lines and split amongst the other actors.

However, this is really meant to be performed with everyone you can get your hands on: the more, the merrier. If you have enough people, feel free to, say, turn the one with back into three, or actually have soldiers and guards on stage – this can be done with small tweaks.

# The Tale of Macbeth. In Five Minutes. In Limericks.

*The Chorus stands stands at a lectern.*

**Chorus:** There once was a man called Macbeth:  
A tale they tell with hushed breath.  
For he rose from a thane,  
To a king, but his reign  
Was packed full of murder and death.

*Macbeth and Banquo enter as if they are exploring.*

**Narrator:** In Scotland, one night long ago.  
Dwelt two generals, Macbeth and Banquo.

**Macbeth** (*gesturing off-stage*): Good Lord, who is there?

**Banquo:** With the hat and the hair?

*A witch approaches them. Macbeth and Banquo shudder.*

**Witch:** I'm a witch-sister, I'll have you know!

(*To Macbeth:*) My sisters and I all agree  
That King of the Scots you shall be!  
(*To Banquo:*) But your son and heir,  
We witches declare  
Shall lead a great Scot dynasty! (Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!)

*The Witch exits laughing. Banquo shrugs and exits.*

**Chorus:** Macbeth spoke to King Duncan later.

*Duncan enters looking upset.*

**Duncan:** My Thane of Cawdor's been a traitor!

*Lady Macbeth enters, hands Macbeth a severed head, then exits. Macbeth presents the head to Duncan.*

**Macbeth:** Well, I've chopped off his head.

**Duncan:** Great! You'll be thane instead!  
For I'm sure you'll get greater and greater.

Speaking of which, I must choose  
A successor to step in my shoes.

*Macbeth looks hopeful in anticipation, but Duncan gestures Malcolm on to stage.*

**Duncan:** It shall be my lad.

**Malcolm:** Wow! Thanks for that, Dad!

**Macbeth** (*with contempt*): Yes, what wonderful, wonderful news.

*Lady Macbeth enters with a knife.*

**Chorus:** So Macbeth told the news to his wife.

**Lady Macbeth:** Let us form a great plot on his life!  
His plans we must scupper!  
Invite him to supper,  
Then you know to do, here's the knife!

*With this words, **Lady Macbeth** pushes the knife into her husband's hands, just as **Duncan** enters, yawning and stretching. **Macbeth** hides the knife behind his back.*

**Chorus:** So the King came for supper and said:

**Malcolm:** I think I'll retire to bed.

***Lady Macbeth** gestures **Duncan** to a comfy sofa, which he falls asleep in, the eyes Macbeth to do the deed. **Macbeth** gingerly approaches Duncan with the knife, but another knife floats on stage before his eyes (probably with a piece of string and a stick).*

**Chorus:** But Macbeth in delusion,  
Saw blades in illusion.

***Macbeth** grits his teeth and stabs **Malcolm** three times with the knife.*

***Duncan** (in time to the stabs): I'm dead! I'm dead! I'm dead!*

***Malcolm** rushes in just in time to see his dead father. **Macbeth** hides his knife behind his back again..*

**Malcolm:** Murder! You've murdered the King!

**Macbeth:** Is that so?

**Chorus:** ... said Macbeth with a grin.

**Lady Macbeth:** Are you having us framed?

**Macbeth:** You should be quite ashamed!

**Macbeth & Lady Macbeth:** Guards! It wasn't us, it was him!

***Malcolm** runs away. **Macbeth** takes the crown from Duncan's body and sits on a throne. **Lady Macbeth** drags his body off.*

**Chorus:** But no sooner than taking the throne.  
Came the fears that he'd be overthrown.

***Lady Macbeth** returns, affectionate to **Macbeth**, easing a sword into his hand.*

**Lady Macbeth:** Macbeth, just a hitch,  
It's the words of that witch,  
Now, you wouldn't want Banquo's son grown?

*Macbeth begrudgingly exits and returns dragging in Banquo.*

**Macbeth:** Banquo, I'm slaying your son!

**Banquo:** Hah! You're too late! I told him to run!  
He's over the border!

*Macbeth stabs Banquo.*

**Banquo:** Hey, that's out of order!

*Banquo falls down dead. Lady Macbeth comforts Macbeth.*

**Lady Macbeth:** We'll find him, we'll see that it's done.

*Lady Macbeth removes Banquo.*

**Chorus:** But in England rebellion grew.

*Macduff enters menacingly, remaining on one side of the stage, calling to Macbeth on the other.*

**Macduff:** If you fear for your future, it's true!  
Let me show,

**Chorus:** ... said MacDuff,

**Macduff:** That enough is enough!  
You are finished, you're done for, you're through!

*The witch enters the other side to speak to Malcolm.*

**Witch:** Macbeth, I break more news to thee!  
Macduff is your new enemy!

**Macbeth:** Then his castle in Fife,  
With his children and wife,  
Shall be wiped out by royal decree!

**Witch:** Ah, but fear not! You shall be King till  
Brinam wood meets Dunsinane Hill.  
And what's more: I warn  
That anyone born  
Of a woman, who fights you, you'll kill! (Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!)

*The witch exits laughing. Siward rushes across the stage to Macduff.*

**Macduff:** Young Siward, what news do you bring?

**Siward:** It's your family, slain by the king!

**Macduff:** Why, the murderous swine.  
Very well, it is time:  
Let us fight, let us die, let us win!

*Macduff and Siward exit. Macbeth sees Lady Macbeth sleepwalking across the stage.*

**Chorus:** Back in Scotland, in a feeling of gloom  
Walked the Queen in her sleep round the room.

*Malcolm and Banquo, both as ghosts, float around Macbeth.*

**Malcolm:** Who! Can you hear our screams?

**Banquo:** Yes! We're haunting your dreams,

**Malcolm and Banquo:** With your future of downfall doom!

*Malcolm and Banquo float. Lady Macbeth enters in a panic, holding a knife and a bottle of poison.*

**Lady Macbeth:** Dear, an army's arrived out of gate.  
Let's escape from a horrible fate!

*Macbeth faces away from Lady Macbeth towards the audience.*

**Macbeth:** But wait! Don't you see  
It is our destiny ...

*As Macbeth speaks, Lady Macbeth quickly drinks the poison, stabs herself with the knife and falls down dead.*

**Macbeth:** To triumph and ... (*sees Lady Macbeth dead*) oh, I'm too late.

*Siward sneaks on stage hiding behind a small tree branch he is holding. He calls out to Macbeth, drawing his sword.*

**Siward:** Macbeth, you dirty old rat!

**Macbeth:** If you beat me, then I'll eat my hat.  
I'll defeat you with ease!  
Come on, where are the trees?

*Siward holds up his branch.*

**Siward:** (You mean this?)

**Macbeth:** Oh right, I did not think of that.

*Macbeth draws his sword, so does Siward, and they exchange a few swipes.*

**Macbeth:** Still, I've got one more trick up my sleeve.  
Born of a woman, I believe?

**Siward:** Of course I was. Why?

**Macbeth:** 'Cause you're going to die!

*Macbeth stabs Siward, who falls down dead.*

**Macbeth:** Are there any more heads I can cleave?

*Macduff enters, also hiding behind a branch. As he enters, he throws the branch away, and draws his sword.*

**Macduff:** Hold on, Macbeth, not so fast.  
Your reign is a thing of the past!  
Let us fight in a duel.

**Macbeth:** So be it, you fool!  
I'll see to it that it's your last.

*Macbeth and Macduff have a quick swordfight.*

**Macbeth:** I'll be beaten by no man on earth!

**Macduff:** Even those of Caesarian birth?

**Macbeth:** Hmm ... that wasn't made clear.  
Are you saying ... (*realises*) Oh dear.

**Macduff:** Now put them up, show what you're worth!

*Macbeth and Macduff fight. After a few strokes, Macduff kills Macbeth.*

**Chorus:** And so it was Macbeth was slain.  
Fate was both his friend and his bane.

*Malcolm enters. Macduff takes the crown from Macbeth, places it on Malcolm's head, and he sits on the throne.*

**Chorus:** With the battle then won,  
Duncan's favourite son,  
Became king, for a glorious reign.

*All get up and bow.*

---

Thank you for reading this sample script. © Chris Neville-Smith, 2006/2012. Permission granted to circulate, read and perform this for non-profit use until further notice, but I would appreciate it if anyone wanting to perform this let me know (e-mail: [chris.neville-smith@dunelm.org.uk](mailto:chris.neville-smith@dunelm.org.uk)). If you circulate this by web or e-mail, please credit me as the author, do not remove this copyright notice, and if posted on the internet, provide a link back to my website at <http://chrisnevillesmith.info>. For any professional or commercial use, you will need to obtain my permission in advance.

If you enjoyed this, you can find more information about what I write and direct do on my website. Most stuff I write is more serious than this.